

ADOPTION PROCESS – INFORMATION FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

<input type="checkbox"/> Step 1:	Family identifies self as interested in adoption—completes the Resource Family Assessment (RFA) process which also includes attending the Parenting Resources for Information, Development and Education (PRIDE) classes.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 2:	Family is matched with a child/children or they have a child/children already placed in their home, and they are open to being a Concurrent Plan for the minor (if all biological relatives have been ruled out).
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 3:	Judge ends Family Reunification (FR) between the parent/s and child/children and case is transferred to an adoption social worker. This does not mean that the parental rights have been terminated, only that the Judge has stopped the family reunification phase of the case. The focus has changed from Reunification to creating a Permanent Plan for the child. The adoption social worker may have been assigned to the case as a secondary social worker during the FR time frame.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 4:	Family must have an approved adoptive home study or RFA to be considered as permanent placement for child/children. That consists of attending the training classes and other requirements.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 5:	Family saves all of the ORIGINAL RECEIPTS for expenses related to the adoption process to be submitted later. There is a separate fund that can reimburse families up to \$400.00 for expenses related to adoption that can include the State set adoption fee of \$500.00 or Live Scan fees, health care fee for physical, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 6:	Permanency Planning Mediation (PPM) will be discussed with the family and a referral will be made to Consortium for Children if all parties agree. PPM is a voluntary service that can result in a written, legal agreement between adoptive parents, biological parents and possible relatives regarding contact post adoption finalization. PPM’s minimize losses for children and help them maintain some connection to significant people in their lives. For more information visit: www.consortforkids.org
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 7:	A 366.26 court hearing is held to identify the permanent plan for the child/children. The three options are: Adoption, Guardianship and Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA) which was previously called long term foster care. The regulations require the Department to rule out Adoption before Guardianship and rule out Guardianship before PPLA.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 8:	The Judge may terminate the parents’ rights to the child and order adoption as the permanent plan. The parents can appeal the Court decision. If they do, the case may be delayed 9-12 months.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 9:	Department receives the Court order terminating parental rights which is then sent to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) in Sacramento. CDSS accepts that document and issues a confirmation that indicates that the child is legally free and able to be placed for adoption.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 10:	The adoption social worker has discussed the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) with the family. AAP can provide ongoing MediCal coverage and financial support to adoptive parents of qualified special needs children. Family completes the Request for Adoption Assistance if they determine they need this assistance while taking into consideration what financial support they are able to provide to this child/children. A deferred AAP agreement can also be signed which can be activated at a later date. If a special care rate is to be requested the family may need to submit additional documents to support request for the additional funds. The AAP funds are renewed at least every two (2) years.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 11:	Adoption social worker submits AAP request to supervisor and division manager for approval.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 12:	Family to inform the adoption social worker what legal name they want the child to have after adoption.

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<input type="checkbox"/> Step 13:	Adoption social worker meets with the family to sign the official paperwork switching family from foster care placement to adoptive placement. Family pays the \$500.00 adoption fee (per child) at this time. Fee is set by CDSS. Family is able to be reimbursed up to \$400.00 per child from another account. The reimbursement can be for the adoption fee or other onetime expenses related to the adoption up to \$400.00.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 14:	Once the adoptive placement papers have been signed and the adoption fee has been paid the adoption social worker will complete the paperwork for the Court adoption finalization hearing. Family must pay \$20.00 (check made payable to SLO Superior Court) to file their adoption request.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 15:	As long as there is no appeal pending on the case a court date for the adoption finalization hearing can be scheduled.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 16:	Currently adoption finalization hearings are held at SLO Superior Court on Friday mornings. The parent/s and child are required to attend. Family can invite other family and friends if they wish. Cameras are allowed in the court room for these hearings. Hearing is very brief but celebratory in nature.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 17:	After adoption finalization hearing the adoption social worker submits a request to the Juvenile Court to dismiss the Dependency case since the child no longer needs the protection of the Courts.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 18:	Department changes the foster care funds over to the AAP funds once finalization hearing takes place. AAP funds are paid on the first of the month for that month and foster care funds are paid in arrears. There is a form to complete if you wish your AAP checks to be directly deposited into a checking/savings account.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 19:	All original receipts the family has are submitted for reimbursement. Reimbursement is for non reoccurring adoption expenses and will be reimbursed up to \$400.00 per special needs child adopted.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 20:	The family will receive directly from SLO Superior Court the Order of Adoption about 1-2 weeks after the finalization hearing. This is a very important document, place it somewhere safe.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 21:	The family can take the Order of Adoption that lists the child’s new legal name to the Social Security Office and apply for new card for the minor in their new name, closing the previous number. You don’t need to change the social security number if you don’t wish to. Some people prefer to change it for privacy/security reasons.
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 22:	The family will receive the new Amended Birth Certificate directly from Vital Statistics in 2-4 months. If your child was born out of the state of California, you may need to send a document to that State’s Vital Statistics office to receive the Amended Birth Certificate. The SLO County Court Clerk will help with that, if necessary.

Congratulations! This completes the formal adoption process. The family is welcome and encouraged to participate and attend ongoing workshops and trainings offered by the Department and by Cuesta College.

WEBSITES FOR ONGOING SUPPORT AND EDUCATION	
North American Council on Adoptable Children - nacac.org	Childtrauma.org
The National Child Trauma Stress Network - nctsn.org	
Child Welfare Information Gateway - Childwelfare.gov	Adoptive Families - Adoptivefamilies.com
Kinship Center - Kinshipcenter.org	Adopt US Kids - Adoptuskids.org

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